



Fully Alive!

COMMUNICATING AND CELEBRATING THE MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF HOLY CROSS

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CREATION TO CONSUMMATION

As we prepare mentally, physically, and financially for the start of another school year, there is much to do, think about, and plan for. Especially with an upcoming presidential election looming over our nation and the turmoil of wars and rumors of wars in our world, the diversion of another school year is a welcome interruption to the normal news feeds. I can't think of a much better theme for this coming year than what RCLS has chosen as their focus for the next school year. "Joyful" – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Regardless of our external circumstances and what is happening in this life, God calls us to rejoice in Him, pray to Him, and give thanks to Him. At times when we look at our surroundings this can be challenging, but when we look at God we begin to see the goodness that is all around us despite the brokenness in our world.

This is also true in our study of the book of Revelation. When we talk about difficult topics like the antichrist, martyrdom, and wars, it can become burdensome and difficult—if that is where we point

our focus. But the point of this verse and of the Scriptures is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Although we live in this world and know the frailty and the sorrow that it can bring, when we focus on Jesus and the joyful eternity that He alone can offer, our perspective changes from dread and fear to hope and the peace of forever after.

In our Holy Cross VBS this summer we went on a Jungle Journey and studied about the whole Biblical story from Creation to Consummation. We traveled from Genesis to Revelation and looked at the big picture of what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen. When we keep the big picture in mind instead of only the sorrow and pain that we experience in this life, then we learn to be joyful regardless of our circumstances. One of the songs that we learned during our Jungle Journey VBS was "Peace, Love, Joy" by Answers In Genesis. I am including the lyrics for the song as a reminder of what awaits us as Christ followers for all of eternity!

Peace, Love, Joy

(Jungle Journey VBS Lyrics)

There'll be peace and love and laughter
No more sorrow and pain
There'll be joy forever after
Under Jesus reign
That's where I'll be
For eternity

In a world full of sorrows
Where is joy to be found?
Who gives hope for tomorrow?
Then Jesus came and in His name
Salvation is found

And there'll be peace
So much peace
And there'll be love
Oh love, love, love
And there'll be joy
So much joy
No more crying no more pain
No more brokenness and shame

Come, Lord Jesus!

~Pastor Jeff Niederstadt



DISCIPLESHIP DIGEST – PRACTICE 2: HEARING FROM JESUS

Take a moment to consider the sounds you hear in a day. Birds chirp in the summer mornings. Cars drive by in a hum of busyness. The TV plays in the background even now, droning on about something with no audience near it. Our days are filled with constant noise. The avenues where we find reprieve from such sounds are few and far between. I recently passed a hiker who was playing music on a device while walking down the trail. Even in moments of silence, we fill it with more noise.

In a world surrounded by sound, voices, and so much noise, we arrive at our second Joining Jesus practice: Hearing from Jesus. In a vacuum, this concept is easy.

Listen to God in His Word, as it is revealed through His Son. We hear that word every Sunday when we gather for worship. We open our Bibles to read that word in personal devotion. Or perhaps you find yourself missing those opportunities to hear from God’s Word.

“I’m expecting to hear from someone else.” “I’ve got an appointment to get to.” “I’m too busy for devotion today.” Have you ever heard someone say a similar phrase? You’ve probably said one yourself. It is easy for us to fly through life attending to things that, make no mistake, are important. We should fulfill our job responsibilities. We should find time to connect

with friends. We should prioritize spending unhurried time with family. As Christians, we also should spend time hearing from Jesus.

It’s hard to add a whole new item to our days, so make it simple. Choose two or three mornings/nights this week. Commit to sit down and read one chapter of a gospel of your choosing (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Do that for a month and consider what you are hearing from Jesus. You might find when you take time to listen to Him, you begin to join Jesus on His mission.

~Pastor Jordan Schut

RCLS UPDATE

A new school year is right around the corner! Students, families, faculty, and staff will be welcomed to a new school year on August 27th. As has become tradition, the red carpet will literally be rolled out! A special welcome event for new families was held on July 18th to help new Bobcats become acquainted with the campus and faculty. There were lots of smiles, new friends made, and pizza and popsicles.

~Laura Rhee, Holy Cross Rep for RCLS



JOINING JESUS CONTINUED: PRAYING FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

I feel God has been preparing Holy Cross to shine His light and proclaim the good news to those He places in our lives. More recently by equipping us through the “God Loves You Tour” as we prayed for and invited our neighbors, the 30 Days of Prayer “Who’s Your One” (or many), and now as we commit to Joining Jesus on His mission. God prepares the hearts and souls – we simply join Him, to be available as He works.

There hadn’t been a block party in our neighborhood in years, so I was excited

when a neighbor planned one. Many new families have moved into the neighborhood. The Lord richly answered my prayers for this block party to be an awesome opportunity to connect, to visit with everyone, and to know my neighbors better. God blessed this time together with joyful, open conversations where a few shared more deeply.

God also answered my prayer (situational and physical) in showing me that Joining Jesus isn’t a “cemented formula of activity” to succeed, but rather He will bless and

provide the moments – if we simply agree, ask Him to use us, and submit to joining Him on His mission. God is in charge.

I am excited and now praying to see what God has planned for future connections with my neighbors, their hearts, for His Kingdom. He is faithful and loves us all dearly.

~ Jo Dean

2024 VBS: THE GREAT JUNGLE JOURNEY



“To the eternal king, be glory forever.” (1 Timothy 1:17)

Last month, the kids of Holy Cross embarked upon a riverboat Jungle Journey for VBS. Along the cruise, they made stops at six key C’s (seas) in God’s history.

Creation: In the beginning, God created all things, and they were very good. He gave the good creation to His people. We are part of the goodness of God’s creation.

Corruption: Creation did not remain good. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and

forced God’s hand. The good Creator cast them out of the garden, into a world that went from good to corrupted.

Catastrophe: As people delved deeper into sin, God sent a catastrophe as judgment upon the world. He saved a remnant of His creation in the ark, so that Noah and his family could tend to a renewed world.

Christ: For generations, God’s people waited for the promise of deliverance to be fulfilled. That promise bore fruit in the man, Jesus, born of Mary. Christ was the savior sent to restore corrupted creation.

Cross: The restoring work of Christ took place on the cross, where He died and later rose again. In this way, creation was freed from its bondage to sin and death.

Consummation: He is coming again. Jesus will return to renew the creation which was once very good. Then, all who confess faith in His name will be reunited with God in glory for all eternity.

These reminders are for us all. We rejoice in God’s work in VBS, kids, and all people.

“To the eternal king, be glory forever!”



Thanks to The Great Jungle Journey photographer, Danny Robb, for the photos!

SPECIAL EDITION OF ILLUMINATION STATION: CELEBRATING TWO SUMMER WEDDINGS!

Holy Cross is excited to recognize and congratulate two couples who were married this summer. In June, Katie (nee Bany) and Brandon Eyre were united together, and in July, Samantha (nee Romenesko) and Matteo Finocchi were joined together in marriage. *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* – Colossians 3:14

MR. & MRS. BRANDON & KATIE EYRE

Married on June 27, 2024, by Pastor Jordan Schut at Holy Cross, Katie and Brandon met at Holy Cross through “Nightlife!” As they became friends, they started hanging out every Wednesday at Nightlife and eventually spent time together outside of church as well. When asked how they have seen God work in their life together, Katie shared, “We have had many ups and downs in our relationship, but have stuck together over the years for better or worse.” For their wedding ceremony they chose Scripture from Psalm 16:11 (KJV) and Psalm 33:8 (NLT) because, “These were the verses used by my mom’s parents at their wedding; since my grandpa couldn’t be at the wedding, I wanted to include a part of their marriage.” (Katie is the youngest daughter of Chris and Michelle Bany, members of Holy Cross.) Brandon and Katie honeymooned in Illinois, “...where there’s a hotel with themed rooms and is near my favorite restaurant.” Brandon works as a manager at HyVee, and Katie works at “Games by James”. They live in Rochester with their two cats; Holy Cross is their church home. Congratulations, Brandon and Katie Eyre!



MR. & MRS. MATTEO & SAMANTHA FINOCCHI

Samantha and Matteo were married on July 13, 2024, by Pastor Jeff Niederstadt in Red Wing, MN. Matteo and Samantha met at Mercy College in New York. Samantha shared, “Our roommates were brother and sister and they introduced us to each other.” She added, “God directed both of us through the process of selecting a college, leading us to meet at Mercy College.” For their wedding, they chose Proverbs 3:3, 5-6: *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.* Matteo and Samantha are excited to be honeymooning at a resort in Jamaica. Matteo coaches baseball lessons, practices, and teams through the Yard. Samantha is a speech and language therapist at Bishop Elementary School. They plan to stay in Rochester and worship at Holy Cross, which she mentioned has been her church home since 2007. (Samantha is the daughter of Michelle and the late Greg Romenesko, also of Holy Cross.) Congratulations to Matteo and Samantha Finocchi!



May God richly bless these newlywed couples and their marriage as they grow in love for each other and for God, seeking His guidance in their life together as husband and wife.

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever. Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him. – Psalms 16:11 and 33:8 (NLT)

EXCELLING IN WORSHIP

It's through regularly gathering to worship God that we experience God's design for us: people who freely celebrate who He is and what He has done. One of Holy Cross' Ministry Goals for 2024 is to excel in our worship of Almighty God. This is ultimately done through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrifice to atone for all our sins, so we abide in Christ as He increases our faith.

Holy Cross has been also considering physical tools to better focus on God in worship. The rendering to the right shows an option of the platform at the current height and all at one level, with PraiseHym on the platform (thanks to Denise Frey for creating this).

Please keep praying that we can truly be Excelling in Worshiping God, and share your ideas with ministry staff or Sandy Abenstein.

Hallelujah that we can come to God confidently through even just a mustard seed of faith in Jesus!



UPDATE FROM THE HOLY CROSS TRUSTEES TEAM

August will be a busy month at Holy Cross with several maintenance projects occurring.

Please keep these dates in mind:

- August 12 Our re-roofing project begins. This project will include adding much needed attic insulation at the sanctuary, replacing any damaged roof sheathing, and installing new shingles at both the Parish Hall and the Sanctuary. Funds will be coming from savings and from the "Raise the Roof" fundraising.
- August 13 The church building is being used as a polling location for the city of Rochester (remember to vote!)
- August 14-17 There will be no entry into the church building. Spraying of foam insulation into the sanctuary attic will be occur during Aug. 14-16 with an additional 24-hour cure time through Saturday (5 pm).
- August 22-23 The South Parking Lot, which we share with RCLS, will be resealed and restriped. A new concrete apron at the entry will be installed as well. The cost is split with RCLS.
- August 26 School begins at RCLS.

We apologize for any inconvenience and ask your patience as we pray that all goes smoothly and gets done in a timely manner.

Also, we would like everyone to know that the Executive Council has approved proceeding with redoing the North Parking Lot, which includes removal of old asphalt, regrading, installing new 4" bituminous, repairing concrete apron at garage, and installing a new concrete apron at the entry. Estimated cost is \$25,000. The lot has been in disrepair for some time, and our snowplowing service was having difficulty in plowing. You may even have noticed a "sink-hole" at the back of the lot.

Pray for Holy Cross that we can successfully complete these undertakings and thereby bring honor and glory to our Gracious God!

If you get a chance, please take a walk through the Holy Cross Courtyard. We are blessed to have Shelley DeYoung and a crew of volunteers work so diligently on all the flowers and plantings to keep it looking so nice!



CAREPORTAL UPDATE

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand”.

1 Chronicles 29:14



Through the grace of God, we are blessing many, many families through CarePortal, serving 278 local children in the first half of 2024! We're meeting urgent needs when families have exhausted all other resources. For example, when a young

mom and client of Next Chapter Ministries needed baby items for her soon-to-be-born baby, Holy Cross responded – purchasing everything on the list! This was the thank you we received from NCM:

“Holy Cross, the only way to start this is to say how incredible and giving you are! Thank you for supporting this new young mom and helping set her up for success! Your generosity is amazing! Truly, thank you so very much! Truly, Your NCM Family”

If you are a Thrivent member, you can help us meet **even more needs**, by applying for a Thrivent Action Team debit card!!

Thrivent members can request **\$250** through this program, **twice a year**, for

items such as beds, bedding, dressers, couches, kitchenware, baby items, etc. These are all commonly requested items in CarePortal. The process is easy and Jude Ledebuhr has volunteered to train anyone who's interested and has questions about this awesome Thrivent program. Please contact Jude to find out more: judehugs1@gmail.com

~Denise Frey,
Olmsted County CarePortal Ambassador

COUNCIL CORNER: HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Council met on Tuesday: July 16, 2024

Joining Jesus: Council “took ten” and shared responses to some of the 5 Questions from Dwelling 1:14.

Devotions and Prayer: Our focus for Holy Cross in 2024 is evangelism. Pastor Jeff shared the devotion “First Things First” based on John 1:41-42. The first thing Andrew did after finding out Jesus was the Messiah was to tell his brother Simon (Peter). It doesn't take a scholarly degree or deep training to share Jesus with others.

Motions: Council approved two updated handbooks: Elders and Treasurer. Earlier in the month, a hole in the back parking lot surface was discovered. A motion was approved to proceed to resurface the north parking lot and repair the cement apron and cement entry to the garage at a cost of approximately \$25,000.

Discipleship: The Creative Women's gathering has been hosting up to 17 ladies from MN Adult Teen Challenge, enjoying a themed devotion, crafts, and fellowship together. MNATC would like to send more (up to 35 ladies), but this means **more HC women** are needed to attend to support

this exciting outreach opportunity. See Sherri Emedo.

Facilities (Trustees): The roofing project (replacement, insulation, and electrical) is slated for August 12-16. The south parking lot project shared with RCLS is scheduled for August 22-23. That lot will be resealed, restriped, and an entrance concrete apron built.

RCLS: Ms. Emily Barlow accepted a position to assist with Physical Education for the younger children. Bryan Busse, a parent, will be taking on the role of Athletic Director. Christian Family Services is working to fill the counselor position.

Holy Cross RCLS Tuition Assistance: A formal letter of grant award will be sent to five Holy Cross families (seven students) who completed the tuition assistance application and verification process.

HC Communications Team: A summary slide show was presented by Mark Matthias and Cindy Wessel on the team's accomplishments. Two new forms, created by Diane Straka in OCS, are to be used for Communication or Event planning requests.



AN ANONYMOUS TESTIMONY ON GIVING

Many years ago when I was pregnant with our first child, my husband and I had many conversations about tithing. It was important to us to do but didn't feel like we had a good understanding of how much God wanted us to give back to Him.

When talking to an acquaintance about our pregnancies, somehow the conversation turned to tithing. Her question to me was, "Do you want God to bless you on your net or your gross?" That struck a chord with me, and I felt very moved from that point forward that I should not be tithing on my net income but rather my gross!

Shortly thereafter, my husband and I heard a sermon about tith-

ing. The message was that God *requires* our first fruits (10%) but anything above the 10% is truly the *gift*. Lev. 27:30 speaks to the tithe, the Hebrew word for "tithe" meaning "ten".

It amazed us how God spoke to us in several different ways after we asked Him to help us understand what He wanted us to give back to Him! From that point forward (it was 2010) we decided we would increase our giving by 1% each year and base it on our gross. This was a major leap of faith! But God provided in ways we could not conceive! Blessings poured down year after year in ways that were completely mind blowing! (Many times it was not financial.) Why should

we have been surprised, we asked ourselves, when God clearly tells us in His word to "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and test me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing." Malachi 3:10.

It is 2024, and giving 24% of our gross is an enormous challenge, but we continue to trust in God, and He continues to heap blessings upon blessings. Not only are the blessings wonderful but also the true dependence on God this commitment brings.

May God bless you in all of your tithes *and* offerings!

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

Malachi 3:10

TREASURER REPORT

We hope that you have received a mid-year giving statement of your gifts for the ministry of Holy Cross.

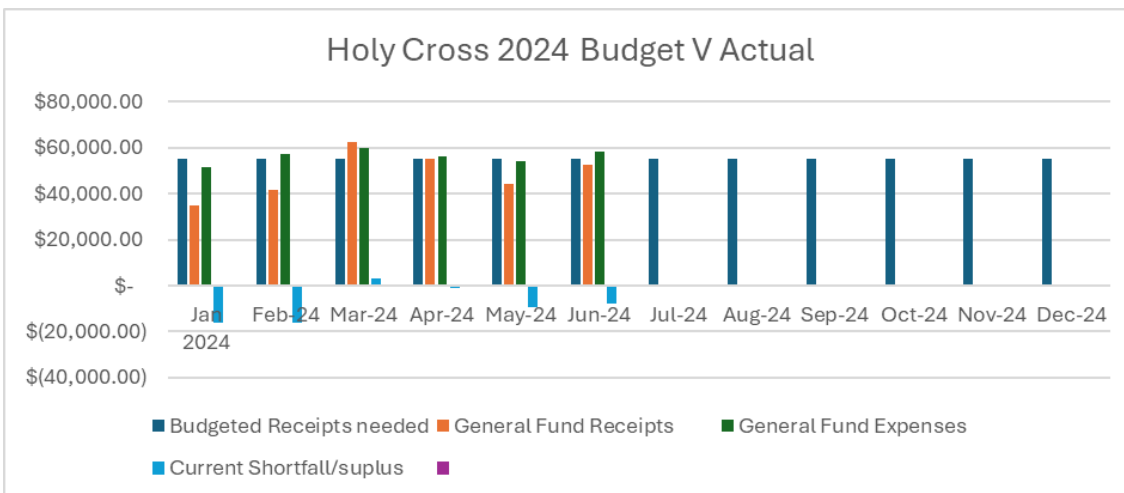
A shortfall of receipts has continued in 2024 general fund giving versus operating expenses. At the current time our shortage of General Fund gifts vs. our expenses is approximately \$40,000, or an average of \$7,000/mo. Your on-going tithes and gifts

are critical for our ministries. We are working to reduce expenses; however a large portion of the budget is fixed in the near-term in salaries, benefits, RCLS Support, building utilities and maintenance. Maintaining giving across the summer months when vacationing is an important help. Below is a monthly summary of General Fund receipts and expenses.

In Luke 12, Jesus tells the parable of the Rich Fool. Having worked hard to save up all he needed for the future, he recognized that he didn't have enough storage for all his wealth and so determined to build bigger barns. But God came to him and warned him that his life was at an end. All his wealth had come to naught. Note how Jesus ends the parable: "This is how it will

be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

~Roger Lindahl
Holy Cross Treasurer



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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

2703 9th Avenue NW
Rochester MN 55901

Phone: 507.289.1354

Fax: 507.289.4815

Email: info@holycross-church.org

Website: www.holycross-church.org

Holy Cross Picnic and Worship

August 17



All are invited

Chester Woods County Park

7 miles east of Rochester
on Highway 14

Come for the day

Make use of the many amenities

Potluck Church Picnic

Starting at 6:00pm
Picnic Shelter 4

Worship

Following the picnic
Amphitheater adjacent to Picnic Shelter